

Homeless Veterans Ride 2012

ABOUT THE RIDE: On June 23, eight bicyclists will begin a six-day, 425-mile journey from Huntington to Washington, D.C., to raise money for the Homeless Veterans Resource Center in downtown Huntington. The ride will conclude June 28 with a visit to many of the war memorials in our nation's capital. The riders will sleep at United Methodist churches in towns along the way, including Clendenin, Sutton, Elkins and Petersburg. The modest sleeping arrangements are on purpose to remember the plight of homeless veterans in West Virginia. The ride is spearheaded by Huntington resident Bill Hill, who works at the VA's regional office in downtown Huntington. Hill and his friend Jim Rife rode to Wheeling, WV, last year and raised nearly \$2,000 for this cause.

ABOUT THE HOMELESS VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER: All proceeds from the ride will go to the VA's Homeless Veterans Resource Center. The center is not a homeless shelter. Its sole purpose is to provide veterans with the information and skills they need to find permanent housing and become employed. On site, there are social workers to assist veterans with accessing care at the VA Medical Center in Spring Valley, transitional housing, permanent housing, legal issues, substance abuse issues and employment services. United Way of the River Cities also teaches financial- and budgeting-skills courses at the Resource Center. The Center's catchment area includes 2 counties in Ohio, 10 in West Virginia and 12 in Kentucky.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES: As of May 1, the cyclists had raised more than \$18,000 for the Resource Center. They hope to raise \$20,000. A large portion of the proceeds will go toward purchasing home-starter kits. Each kit includes dishes, silverware, pots, pans, cooking utensils, bathroom necessities and cleaning supplies. Proceeds also will go toward purchasing air mattresses and monthly, weekly and daily bus passes so clients can get to doctor's appointments, job interviews and the grocery store. The Resource Center's goal this year is to find permanent housing for at least 50 homeless veterans. These items, which are not included in the VA's appropriation to the Resource Center, are crucial toward meeting that goal.

HOW TO MAKE A DONATION: All donations should be mailed to Homeless Veterans Resource Center (ATTN: LeeAnn Bills, bike ride), 624 9th St., Huntington, WV 25701. Checks should be made out to "VA Volunteer Services." The memo line should say "homeless program ride." **All donations are tax-deductible.** Simply request a return tax-deduction letter when you send in your donation.

QUESTIONS: Call LeeAnn Bills, Resource Center coordinator, at 304-429-6755, ext. 4601 or email LeeAnn.Bills@va.gov. For more information about the ride, email Bill Hill at jayhoops_10@yahoo.com or Bryan Chambers at bryan.chambers77@yahoo.com. Also, check out our Facebook page at "Homeless Veterans Ride 2012."